

collections. This is true only if participating institutions collaborate early to realize this future goal. Best practices and standards are perhaps the best tools to ensure that the collections of separate institutions "speak to each other" in the virtual world, bringing greater value to their users.

It is with the users in mind that the North Carolina State Library Commission, its Access to Special Collections Working Group (now the NC ECHO Advisory Committee), and its many partners throughout the State of North Carolina began their work in 2000. Scholars and students, hobbyists and businessmen may consult that long ago letter or book, that tape recording or handicraft, that forgotten photograph or major work of art, never knowing the first thing about metadata or standards, resolutions or work flow charts. They only know that they've found what they were looking for and that they are happier and better informed for it.

These guidelines are structured to help you successfully initiate digital projects. Chapters 1 and 2 (**Project Planning and Selection**) provide direction on the essential initial stages of a digitization project. Chapter 3 (**Legal Considerations**) uncovers some of the major components of United State copyright law as it pertains to digitization, including suggestions and recommendations for activities to undertake to ensure compliance with the law. Chapter 4 (**Digital Production**) outlines the details for creating digital surrogates of your materials. Included are decision-making matrices for hardware and software as well as the technical standards endorsed by NC ECHO. A new section of that chapter deals with the challenges of audio digitization. Chapter 5 (**Metadata**) introduces the concept of metadata and outlines standards in constructing appropriate and adequate metadata to accompany your digital images to assure access to your materials in the online environment. Chapter 6 (**Digital Preservation**) introduces issues about sustainability and long-term persistence of your digital project, including recommendations about storage practices and mediums. Chapter 7 (**Presenting your Digital Project**) covers issues of web design and accessibility to ensure that the hard work of digital production and metadata is not lost in poor presentation on the Internet. Chapter 8 (**Targeting the K-12 Audience**) deals with the specific issues that are important in creating digital projects that will be primarily used by as an educational resource. Finally, Chapter 9 (**Project Evaluation**) discusses the components of evaluation to take into consideration throughout the life of a digital project. Finally, Chapter 10 (**Project Management**) discusses the very real impact of digital projects on institutions from a management perspective. This chapter includes sections on workflow and staffing, training, timelines and objectives, physical facilities, and disaster preparedness.

Taken as a whole, the *Guidelines for Digitization* attempts to offer insight into the many areas that emerge as a digital project is underway. Careful planning and management are essential, but without a clear understanding of the various elements of a digital project, institutions are assured to hit many potholes along the way. These guidelines seek to help you avoid the most common ones.